

Message Text

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PAGE 01 TOKYO 18807 230853Z
ACTION EA-09

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FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO
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C O N F I D E N T I A L TOKYO 18807

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: JA, KS, PFOR
SUBJECT: JAPANESE REACTION TO CARTER DECEMBER 21 STATEMENT ON
KOREAN TROOP WITHDRAWALS

REFS: A. TOKYO 17851; B. TOKYO 18482

1. TOKYO PRESS GAVE PROMINENT PLAY TO PRESIDENT-ELECT
CARTER'S DECEMBER 21 RESTATEMENT OF CAMPAIGN
PLEDGE TO WITHDRAW US TROOPS GRADUALLY FROM SOUTH
KOREA FOLLOWING CONSULTATIONS WITH ROK AND JAPAN.
AS REPORTED IN PRESS, FONOFF STATED JAPAN HAD NO
MEANS OF RESISTING US WITHDRAWAL; TOOK NOTE OF
CARTER'S ASSURANCES THAT WITHDRAWAL WOULD NOT BE
PRECIPITOUS; AND STRESSED THAT WITHDRAWAL SHOULD BE
ACCOMPANIED BY DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS TO INSURE NE
ASIAN STABILITY, INCLUDING POSSIBLE SOVIET AND
CHINESE ASSURANCES OF RESTRAINT. SANKEI AND
MAINICHI STRUCK RELATIVELY DOWNBEAT TONE, DESCRIBING
"SURPRISE" AND "SHAKEN OPTIMISM" AT FONOFF OVER
APPARENT INEVITABILITY OF WITHDRAWAL AND EMPHASIZING
JAPAN'S CONSTITUTIONAL INABILITY TO PARTICIPATE IN ANY MILITARY
BURDEN-SHARING FOR ROK DEFENSE.

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2. IN CONVERSATION WITH EMBOFF, FONOFF NE ASIA
DIVDIR ENDO (THE UNIDENTIFIED FONOFF OFFICIAL
IN PRESS ARTICLES) CONFIRMED HIS COMMENTS TO PRESS
THAT (1) GOJ COULD NOT "RESIST" USG DECISION TO
WITHDRAW TROOPS AND (2) WITHDRAWAL SHOULD BE WITHIN
CONTEXT OF STRENGTHENED ROK MILITARY CAPABILITY AND

LOWERED INTERNATIONAL TENSIONS ON KOREAN PENINSULA.
ENDO SAID OTHER COMMENTS ATTRIBUTED TO FONOFF ON
BURDEN-SHARING AND DETAILS OF POSSIBLE DIPLOMATIC
EFFORTS WERE JOURNALISTIC EMBROIDERY.

3. COMMENT: EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT EARLIER GOJ
STATEMENTS DESCRIBING US TROOP PRESENCE IN KOREA AS
"ESSENTIAL" TO NE ASIAN SECURITY (REFTELS)
REPRESENTED GENUINE CONCERN THAT NEW ADMINISTRATION
MIGHT SHIFT KOREAN FORCE POSTURE IN WAYS THAT
WOULD IMPAIR NE ASIAN BALANCE OF POWER. WITH
CLEAR SIGNAL FROM PRESIDENT-ELECT THAT WITHDRAWALS
WOULD BE ACCOMPLISHED IN GRADUAL PHASES AND THAT
JAPAN WOULD BE FULLY CONSULTED, MORE FLEXIBLE JAPANESE
ATTITUDE HAS BEGUN TO SURFACE.
HODGSON

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